

# Copperhead Scare at School Turns Out to Be Non-Harmful Milk Snake

By STEPHEN CHIGER  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Concern that venomous snakes may lurk near a Scotch Plains school have ended not with a fang but a whimper.

According to authorities, reports that a copperhead snake was found near the Brunner Elementary School are mistaken. The culprit, instead, is a harmless milk snake, a non-poisonous reptile often mistaken for the copperhead.

Brunner School Principal Jeffrey Ross said he sent out a June 6 letter to parents indicating that at least one copperhead had been found after receiving a call from police a few weeks earlier. One month prior, an officer thought he had caught and disposed of a copperhead on a property adjacent to the school.

However, according to Scotch Plains Police Captain Joseph Protasiewicz, the snake, which was never officially identified, was most likely a milk snake.

The copperhead, one of New Jersey's two venomous species, has never been located east of Bridgewater, said Michael Valent, principal zoologist of the New Jersey Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Another snake found near the school later that month was identified by Mr. Valent as the milk snake.

Captain Protasiewicz said he did not know who originally called Mr. Ross, but that it "certainly wasn't done officially." Brunner School was not notified of the clarification until after the letter had been sent to parents.

According to Mr. Ross, the school has not sent an additional letter clarifying the situation because he does not want to cause more confusion.

"It can't hurt to be extra vigilant," said Mr. Ross, who has told the Executive Committee of the school's Parent Teacher Association and expects news to travel by word of mouth.

Today marks the last day of the

regular school calendar at Brunner School, which enrolls approximately 450 pre-kindergarten through fifth graders. Some pre-kindergarten programs will take place during the summer.

In recent weeks, school officials went to each classroom to speak to students about how to treat wild animals. Grass was cut shorter and the school staff kept special watch.

According to Mr. Valent, even venomous snakes will not strike a human unless they feel threatened. He said of the two to three cases of New Jersey residents being struck in the past five years, all involved the victim trying to pick up the snake.

As for the copperhead, it isn't too likely you'll see one in this area, Mr. Valent said. Loss of habitat caused by development and persecution by people has pushed the species to the west.

Location notwithstanding, New Jersey's two poisonous species, the timber rattlesnake and the copperhead, may be identified by their cat-like eyes: a yellowish background with a vertical, elliptical pupil, Mr. Valent said. Copperhead bites are generally known to be non-fatal.

The milk snake, whose name might imply something less fearful, tends to have a Y or V shaped pattern on its head.



CRUISING MINDOWASKIN PARK POND...Many remote-controlled, electric and steam-driven boats will be cruising the pond in Mindowaskin Park in Westfield during the first-ever Westfield Mayor's Regatta on July 15. The boats will be showcased for the public before the races begin.

## First 'Westfield Mayor's Regatta' Slated for July 15 at Mindowaskin

By SETH AUGENSTEIN  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — Mindowaskin Pond does not appear to be legally or logistically conducive to boat racing. Yet, that is exactly what is planned, with the first-ever "Westfield Mayor's Regatta" beginning at 9 a.m. on Sunday, July 15.

Remote-controlled electric and steam-driven boats will cruise the waters at the event, which will be attended by the Northeast Commodore Conference, better known as the NECC.

The NECC is composed of boat clubs in the Northeast Atlantic region, so there is an expected attendance of around 30 people each from Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey, not including the spectators from Westfield and the surrounding Union County region.

The event is the result of the hard work of Westfield resident Bud Haroski, who organized it after being inspired by his grandson's remote-controlled boat hobby. Mr. Haroski has had much success in the past in organizing various events.

He once arranged for Harry James to play for the Middlesex County Cancer Crusade in Piscataway and has also gotten Peter Duchin to attend one of the numerous benefits he has put together. In addition, the versatile Mr. Haroski has served eight years on the Nominating Committee of the New Jersey Sports Hall of Fame. Despite all his proactive history, however, he has refused to settle down as he gets older.

"I have done my share in events past, but it's still nice when people bring something new to the kids and seniors in the community," Mr.

Haroski stated.

The event itself will showcase the boat-building talents of the NECC's members and their impressive machines. These electric and steam-driven masterpieces will be showcased before the races on tables and also in free "floats," so that spectators can appreciate the detail and perfection of the small machines, which nearly match the level of hard work that is needed for a life-size boat.

"Heart and soul goes into the production and maintenance of these boats. It is the hope of the present NECC members that children and adults alike will become involved. The intricacy of these steam-powered boats is amazing," Mr. Haroski emphasized.

In addition, he stressed the assistance of people like Walter Pommnitz of the South Orange Seaport Society, Greg Gradel from Hobytown USA, and the Westfield police, who will retrieve any boats stranded in the water. Without them, he said, the charitable event would not be possible.

A "tag day" PAL Raffle will be held at the event. Hobytown USA, American Industrial Supply in Perth Amboy (where Mr. Haroski works), the Westfield Mayor's office, Greco Carpet Cleaners and Vicki's Diner have cumulatively donated five boats that will be raffled off to lucky spectators.

Mr. Haroski hopes to receive more sponsors, perhaps adding another two boats. This veritable fleet will be showcased on Mindowaskin Pond during the "Regatta" before the boats are raffled off.

Mayors from surrounding communities will potentially each cap-

tain one of the boats. Run-off races will eliminate the participants one by one, culminating with the winner of the bracket racing Westfield Mayor Gregory S. McDermott's entry in the final race of the day.

Invitations have been sent to Mayors Michael Tripodi of Kenilworth, Sal Bonaccorso of Clark, Louis C. Jung of Fanwood, Michael Crincoli of Garwood, Robert F. Viglianti of Mountainside and Martin L. Marks of Scotch Plains to participate.

An invitation has also been sent to New Jersey Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco.

Mr. Haroski received verbal acceptances from two of the mayors, even before the invitations went out, and said he expects most of the invitees to be there and to put on a good show for the crowd.

The outcome is indefinite, although Mayor Bonaccorso has the benefit of a reservoir, while Mayor Crincoli's landlocked town would give him no place to practice.

"Garwood's a longshot, but I wouldn't be surprised to see a few of the invited mayors traveling to Clark's reservoir or Mindowaskin for some nighttime practice runs," Mr. Haroski said, laughing.

Although politicians may be battling in heated races on July 15, the "Westfield Mayor's Regatta" is nevertheless marked for success, Mr. Haroski commented.

"When I walk through Mindowaskin, I'm proud of our town's upkeep," he added. "I want to bring in our great bordering communities, and for everyone to have a great time in Westfield's downtown area. That's what the 'Regatta' is about."

**WEISEMAN HELY DIGIOIA & BOYLE**  
A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
**CERTIFIED TRIAL LAWYERS\***  
INJURY CASES

Jim Hely

See us in the Verizon Yellow Pages.  
Only 1 of 40 lawyers is a  
Supreme Court Certified Trial Lawyer.  
(908) 789-9000

**See it all on the Web!**  
[www.goleader.com](http://www.goleader.com)

## Announcing

### a Money Market Special... Exclusively from The Town Bank of Westfield

# 4.00% A.P.Y.\*

# 3.92% A.P.R.\*\*

**For You . . .**

Premium Money Market\*  
Minimum to open: \$1,500

**For Your Business . . .**

Business Money Market\*  
Minimum to open: \$2,500

**No monthly service fees when you maintain minimum balances!\***

Hurry! Offer is available only at our Elm Street office and expires July 31, 2001.  
Stop by or call our Elm Street office (908) 518-9333 for more information.

## The Town Bank of Westfield

You Will Notice the Difference...

520 South Avenue • Westfield, NJ 07090      44 Elm Street • Westfield, NJ 07090  
Phone: (908) 301-0800      [www.townbank.com](http://www.townbank.com)      Phone: (908) 518-9333

\*Annual Percentage Yield. \*\*Annual Percentage Rate. Balances falling below minimum \$1,500 or \$2,500 will incur a minimum service charge of \$10.00 and no interest is earned. Limited check writing privileges; three checks permitted per cycle. There is a penalty fee for excess transactions. Tiered balances for Premium Money Market Accounts are \$1,500, \$10,000, and \$25,000. Tiered balances for Business Money Market Accounts are \$2,500, \$10,000, and \$25,000. After July 31, rates earned will depend on existing tiered balances and market conditions. Rates subject to change without prior notice. Available only at the Elm Street office.

# PLATYPUS

*For once, life is simple.*  
*The best quality, the best price!*  
**Now Save 20-33%**  
**The Teak Outdoor Furniture Sale!**  
Bring this ad & take an additional \$100 off your Teak Outdoor Furniture purchase!

## Experience It!

**125 Elm Street - Westfield - 908-654-5610**

# FAMILY FEST & CIRCUS

WESTFIELD AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## SUNDAY, JULY 8TH

Streets of Downtown Westfield  
11am-5pm • Streets will be closed.  
Music • Food • Games • Rides • Circus Shows

**ONLY \$8\* (in advance) • \$12\* AT THE EVENT**

**\*Unlimited Rides and Circus Shows (per person)**

**Purchase your Discounted Tickets IN ADVANCE at:**

The Westfield "Y"  
Town Bank (44 Elm St.)  
Windmill

Summit Bank  
PNC Bank  
KINGS in Garwood

(children under 2-yrs-old go free)  
Rain-date: one week later  
More Info: 908-654-4100 or 908-233-3021

Sponsored in part by Comcast @HOME. Sign up for Comcast @Home\* between now and July 8th and receive 2 free tickets to Westfield's Family Fest.

\*Speed comparisons are for downloads only and are compared to 56K and 640K. Upstream speed limited to 128Kbps. Actual speeds may vary. Not available in all locations. @Home and @ball logo are registered trademarks of AT Home Corporation. Some restrictions apply. Service subject to availability in certain Comcast areas only. \* First three months of service are \$9.95 per month. \*\* Regular monthly and equipment rates apply after promotional period. Franchise fees and applicable taxes are additional. For questions about minimum requirements and complete details about service and prices, please call. Offer available to new residential customers located in Comcast Cable wired and serviceable areas only. Limited time offer expires 6/17/01.